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Third World  
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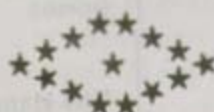
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**Editorial**

# **dipanjali**

**a Annual journal of the delhi parsi anjuman**

**Editor D.E. Mistry**

## **The Third World Zoroastrian Congress**

The third World Zoroastrian Congress is expected to be inaugurated in Bombay within a few days. It is to the delegates who will be attending this Congress that we wish to address these few words.

It is a measure of the apathy shown by the members of the Parsi community that a period of more than 13 years has been allowed to lapse between the second and third Congress even though it was doubtless realised by all that the Congress would be one of the best of forums to debate and find lasting solutions to the immense problems that face the community today and an opportunity to do so could easily have been availed of earlier. It is sad to note that the proposal to hold the Congress and even the subjects to be discussed thereat has been the cause of much acrimonious debate in the Parsi press and among Parsi Anjumans and Panchayats resulting in alignment of members of the community into the orthodox group and a group which could be regarded as the progressives or liberals advocating a bold break from the shackles of orthodoxy and old conventions in order to stem the rapid decline of the community. However, now that an opportunity has occurred for extensive participation by discussion, it is hoped that a large number, both young and old, will avail of this opportunity and sincerely endeavour to find amicable and acceptable solutions to our numerous problems.

The President of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat who is also the President of the Zoroastrian Anjumans of India will be the President of the Congress, However,



be that as it may, any attempt to foreclose or stall debate for the ostensible reason that a subject is controversial will be ill-advised and could eventually result in greater harm. The fear that controversial subjects could break up the Congress is totally ill-founded. Infact, correct solutions are more likely to be arrived at by facing problems boldly and discussing them freely, frankly and openly in the best democratic tradition. The very basis of the religion preached by our Prophet Zoroaster was Truth and Tolerance. And Truth is uncompromisable. The basic principles of our religion are as meaningful today in the modern time context as they were centuries ago. The Prophet was the first to give to mankind the idea of religion and its ethical concepts of freedom of choice and thought and the three inestimable gifts of good thoughts, good words and good deeds. With good thoughts in your minds and hearts think constructively and creatively and not destructively or negatively. When well meaning and sincere men think collectively, solutions will not be difficult to find.

The theme of the Congress is "The Zoroastrian Community in a changing world." Here we must distinguish between the religious term 'Zoroastrian' and the ethnic term 'Parsi', for you should have a clear conception of the difference and how the Zoroastrian religion is tied up with the destiny of the Zoroastrian community consisting of Parsis in the Indian Sub Continent, Parsis who have migrated to U.K., Canada, USA and other countries and the followers of the Zoroastrian religion in Iran. In your deliberations your ultimate aim should be to create a better awareness for the Zoroastrian religion and to bring about a cohesiveness of all Zoroastrians spread throughout the World. The beauty and quintessence of our religion is our identity and the focal point of our lives. You have to ensure that this identity is kept going by a love of religion and a feeling of need for that religion and this can only be achieved if we revive it into a living religion. As Zoroastrians we have learnt to use our faith in our lives. After all your deliberations there should emerge a consensus to make Zoroastrianism more meaningful to each individual.

Concerning the Parsis in India there are various issues agitating the minds of the thinking members of the community. These issues are well known and understood and thus you need not waste any further time in collecting data, analysing statistics and facts and in engaging in useless controversies but devote your energies immediately to the task of defining the objects, determining their priorities and in finding acceptable solutions for them. All who have made a study of the problem of our dwindling numbers have come to the conclusion that the community cannot seriously sustain even its present numbers. How long can the community hope to maintain its biological purity when members are becoming scattered all over the world, when girls and boys are marrying out of the commu-

nity and when not all children of these mixed marriages are allowed into the fold? Some re-thinking in the matter of conversions has been advocated. It will be your duty to ascertain whether a total closed door policy is at all in our interest or whether some limited and judicious entry should not be permitted. We have in the past pointed out that Zoroaster himself welcomed converts—indeed, all religions have started with converts. Since the denial of the right of conversion was not advocated by the Prophet, are we acting within the tenets of his word by appropriating to ourselves this right now? Recent reports in the Parsi press make it clear that initiation of members of other communities has been done in the past. It will be your duty to address yourselves to this problem, to discuss it dispassionately without causing dissension or a cleft in the community and to find an acceptable solution to it.

It is heartening to note that a number of symposia, conferences and seminars among the Zoroastrian communities settled in UK, America and Canada have been held during the last few years. This in itself is a heartening thing and indicative of the awareness of the particularly vulnerable position of these individuals, cut off from their grassroots and parental ties in India. Their problem chiefly is how to retain their identity and yet assimilate in the society of the country of their settlement. Facing the forces of modernisation and progress there is a risk of complete intergration at the cost of total disintergration of the religious fundamentals. For the generation that left India to seek their fortunes in Western countries, to maintain their religious and cultural identity would not be too difficult, but what about their children growing up in a totally different environment to that of their parents? Marriage with non Parsis is a natural consequence of intergration. How can this be avoided? Would you deny their progeny acceptance of the Zoroastrian religion? If you permit initiates would this be a retrograde step? Would this result in increasing the quantity but decreasing the quality? These and many other related questions are for you to consider. The Zoroastrian tradition and faith teach the members of the community to wage a never ending fight against evil and perpetual vigilance and struggle against evil and wrong have instilled certain virtues among Zoroastrians such as faith and tolerance, and fair play and integrity of character. The community's strength lies in its solidarity of ethical principles. If you wish to preserve the Zoroastrian heritage, it is not enough merely to perform the Navjote ceremony of your children but teach them to imbibe the noble virtues of their forefathers.

The idea of establishing a World Zoroastrian Association affiliated to the United Nations and enjoying consultative status was discussed at the first and second Congress and although the proposal has been much talked about since then, nothing concrete has emerged upto now. The Zoroastrian community is now



spread all over the world in some cases in dangerously small numbers unable to maintain their separate identity and some specific consolidating body is essential to keep them together. It is hoped that some concrete steps will be taken in this direction as a result of your deliberations.

It only remains for us now to invoke the blessings of Ahura Mazda on your deliberations and wish you success. Whether you come from Bombay, Delhi, Surat, or New York, Toronto or Tharan, remember that there exists between you a strong and binding common denominator and what you say or do effects us all. We are all deeply involved in the future of our community and we hope that your learning, your wisdom and sagacity will help you to plan for the continued survival of our religion and a better future for our community. The enrichment that you are able to draw from your fellow delegates and impart to others on your return home will be a measure of the success of the Congress.

**We wish you good luck.**



# THE FORGOTTEN PARSI

By

PILOO N. JUNGALWALLA

The young lad leaned against the spade with which he had been digging. Sweat poured from his face and dripped on to his folded hands. An open grave yawned at his feet. He looked dreamily into the distance. Suddenly, he flung the spade away from him and shouted: "I'm not going to spend my life digging graves for poor Muslims. I'm not going to be like my father and grandfather and great grand father living on a miserable pittance digging graves. I'll go away, anywhere, Africa, America, anywhere. I'll make my fortune and then come home."

The word, home, brought him back to a harsh reality. Who would look after his aging parents? Yet he must speak to them, tonight, the earlier the better. Dejectedly he bent down and smoothed the edge of the grave with his bare hands, then picked up his spade and walked home.

Rustomji Jivanji Ghorkhodu (1864-1924), to give him his full name, lived in a poor quarter of Surat. His home was a mere shack. His father sat on a rickety wicker chair that had seen better days. He was in *Sudra* (sacred shirt) and *lengha* (pyjamas), a small, velvet prayer cap on his head. His toes stuck out from his well worn slippers. Rustomji's mother sat on an old *mora*, cleaning a fistful of rice and dal in a platter on her lap. She too was in *Sudra* and *lengha*, but a blouse covered the upper part of her body. "My son will be hungry when he comes home," she mused, "but there is little to give him." Hastily she wiped away the tear that gathered in the corner of her eye. Rustomji strode into the room. Very carefully he placed the cleaned spade in a corner, then touched his parents's feet, and left to bathe.

After the frugal supper of *kicheree* and raw onion was over, the lad sat cross-legged on the floor, one arm round his father's legs and the other round

his mother's. Fondly he gazed into his parents' eyes. "What is it, son?" asked his father smiling back.

"Father, I want to go away, right away, anywhere, Africa, America. I am seventeen. I refuse to spend the rest of my life digging graves. I'll make my fortune and come back to look after you." A spasm of pain crossed the features of both parents, but they controlled themselves. Hesitantly his father spoke :

"You have been a good son to us, Rustom. Go in peace with our blessings. May Ahura protect you wherever you may be."

Tears streamed down the cheeks of all three as they clung to one another. The next morning, the lad went to each one of their neighbours, as poor as he was, and explained the new situation. Would they look after his beloved parents? "Indeed, we shall," replied the neighbours. "Poor we may be, but we are Parsis. We will not beg. Each of us will work twice as hard so as to make a little more to look after your old parents. Be not afraid." The traditional Parsi blessing was pronounced: "Stay well. Remember your prayers. Be successful in all your undertakings." (Majehthi rahejo, bhaniya karjo, fateh karo).

Rustom made his way to Bombay on foot and by bullock cart. As soon as he got to the bustling city, he went straight to the docks and hired himself out as a ship's hand on a schooner which set sail for Durban.

When he landed at Durban, he had not a penny in his pocket. He sought out a Muslim owner of a small firm which sold aerated waters, and offered his services as a coolie. By dint of sheer hard work, combined with a forceful personality, he rose to be a partner in the firm. From that time onward, he was known as 'Parsi' Rustomji.

In 1894, when Gandhiji started his Satyagraha Movement in South Africa, Rustomji joined the movement and became an enthusiastic follower of the Mahatma. As a result, Rustomji was sent to prison several times, beaten and man-handled by the warders. On one occasion, his Sudra and Kusti were taken away from him. Being a devout Parsi, he was in the habit of reciting his Kusti prayers before he sat down to a meal. He preferred to starve rather than eat the prison food without performing the Kusti ritual. When the other prisoners came to know of this, they too refused to eat. Eventually, the prison authorities gave in, and the Sudra and Kusti were restored to their owner. (M.K. Gandhi, *Collected Letters*

and *Gandhi in Africa*, where the relevant Durban Police Records are quoted.)

But the greatest service Rustomji performed for India and the world was when he saved the life of Gandhiji. On his second visit to Durban, as Gandhiji was descending the gangway, he was recognised by some urchins in the street. They started shouting: Gandhi ! Gandhi !

Within seconds, a large crowd began to gather threatening to assault Gandhiji if he dared to move. An intrepid Parsi, a friend of Rustomji, and who had travelled on the same ship, ran back and hustled Gandhiji into his friend's home. There the quick-witted Rustomji dressed Gandhiji in the soiled clothes of his servant. Thus disguised, Gandhiji escaped from the back door and darted down a small lane where a police car awaited him and took him to safety.

In the meanwhile, the angry crowd was hammering at Rustomji's front door. When it was opened, they rushed in, searching every nook and corner for the missing Gandhiji. When he could not be found, they smashed furniture, broke window panes, and departed. Who knows what India's fate would have been if Gandhiji had been lynched by an angry mob before he could even start his life's mission in his own country?

The rest of Rustomji's life was spent in active good works and a close partnership with Gandhiji. It was Rustomji who helped to edit Gandhi's revolutionary newspaper, *Native Opinion*. In 1921, Rustomji founded the M.K. Gandhi Free Library where Indians and Africans could read and study. Soon after, the Parsi Rustomji Hall was built where meetings could be held. Later, the Parsi Rustomji Orphanage was founded for the waifs and strays of all communities. Lastly, Rustomji took pity on the children of Tamilian day labourers, and for them he built the M.K. Gandhi Tamil School. He died in 1924, at the age of sixty, worn out by his labours and the harsh treatment meted out to him in prison.

But it is in the action of his young son of eighteen that the life and faith of Parsi Rustomji shines at his best.

On one occasion, about 45,000 workers, African and Indian, refused to go to work in the mines because of the appalling conditions which prevailed there. A platform, rigged with loud speakers, was hastily installed. Speeches were made by the mining authorities begging the crowd to return to work. When this failed, there was a lathi charge, and police firing. Still the sullen crowd refused to



budge. Orders were thereupon issued for the Dutch Commandant to bring out his cavalry and mow down the helpless workers.

At this point, the eighteen year old son of Rustomji fought his way through the crowd and, flinging himself on the Dutch Commandant's horse, begged permission to address the workers and persuade them to leave peacefully. The Commandant was so struck by the lad's courage that he gave him permission to speak.

Slowly the boy mounted the platform and looked round. He saw grim, determined, angry faces. His courage almost failed him, but his father's teaching came to his help. At a time of crisis, turn to prayer. In a low, faltering voice he asked the crowd if they would bear with him for a moment while he said his Kusti prayers? Then with trembling fingers, he untied the Kusti slowly from his waist, and in a voice charged with emotion, he began to recite the familiar prayers. The crowd did not understand the words, but they could sense the concern, the agony and the anxiety in the boy's voice. They were touched. The chanting of the prayers calmed the listeners. A more reflective mood prevailed. Divine intervention answered the lad's prayers. He spoke words of wisdom beyond his years. In a quiet, confident voice, he asked the workers whether they had the right to allow themselves to be trampled to death under the hooves of horses? What of their wives and children left behind? Who would care for them? They must live in order to fight and win,

The miracle occurred. The workers went back to work. The boy still stood, trembling and in a daze, overcome by the goodness of God, who through the humble efforts of a young stripling, had saved 45,000 lives.

Suddenly, the lad felt a familiar arm round his shoulders. He turned and looked into the shining eyes of his father. Without a word spoken, father and son turned homeward. Still without a word spoken, they went into the little prayer room where a *dīvo* was burning. They lit sandalwood and incense on the family Afarghan (fire censer). Picking up the well-worn, black, velvet prayer caps, they placed these on their heads and silently began to pray. A feeling of overwhelming thankfulness filled their hearts. This day, Ahura Mazda, Lord of Life and Wisdom, Creator, Protector and Nourisher, had saved 45,000 men from a cruel and horrible death.

This story about Rustomji's son was told to me many years ago by a relative of the family. Faded newspaper clippings of the day were also shown to me

H.D. Darukhanawala, in *Parsi Lusture on Indian Soil*, mentions the incident of the 45,000 workers. He has reproduced a snapshot of Rustomji standing and leaning one hand on a black umbrella. He is a sturdy looking man with a round, chubby face, a fento on his head, and wearing the white pyjamas and long, black, buttoned up coat of the Parsi *sethia*. He looks the very image of stolid determination.

Today, many of us have cast aside the Sudra and Kusti as useless encumbrances. But what have we gained thereby? Are we not in danger of turning ourselves into empty boxes in which any pebble can rattle? Is there a single Parsi living today to whom we can point and say: "Here is a worthy successor to 'Parsi Rustomji'?" Is it not time we made an effort to love and understand our faith? For there can be no true love without understanding. I leave my readers to reflect for themselves.

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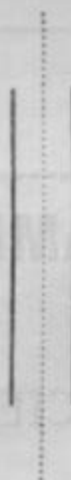
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# Zoroastrianism and The Parsis in India

S. D. NARGOLWALA

The subject itself can be divided into two parts (1) an explanation of the religion itself and (2) the history of Zoroastrianism and of Zoroastrians down through the ages.

Zoroastrianism is not a religion in the sense in which the term is commonly understood. Zoroastrianism does not contain the ingredients which are ordinarily supposed to form part of religion viz. dogmatism, compulsions from without, blind faith, the fear of punishment and the expectation of future reward as the impelling forces in our daily life. Zoroastrianism is rather a scientific and rational explanation of existence, of reality as a whole, of man's place in it, his duties while in this life and the high destiny which he can achieve by establishing his conduct in accordance with the eternal and immutable law of Nature which Zarathushtra called the Law of Asha. Zoroastrianism is essentially based upon knowledge and illumination, therefore, our emblems are the Fire and the Sun, the latter being the source of all light and illumination. Far from discouraging enquiry and questioning, Zarathushtra welcomes a spirit of rational enquiry and is fully competent to offer a rational and scientific explanation. Therein lies the glory of this religion. The word, Zarathushtra, is composed of 'Zarath' golden, and 'Ushtra', light, so Zarathushtra means "He of the Golden Light."

The era of Zarathushtra is a matter of some controversy amongst scholars. Western scholars are tempted to place Zarathushtra as late as in 650 B.C., but this view is based upon equating Hystaspes, the father of King Darius of the Achaemenian Dynasty (558-330 B.C.), with Vishtaspa who ruled in the Kyanian period (2,000-700 B.C.), and in whose time Zarathushtra really lived. From the internal evidence of the five *Gathas* (hymns) the work of the Prophet himself, philologists today put the date of Zarathushtra at about 2,000 B.C. or earlier.

"Zarathushtra is said to have been born probably in Rhages, now Rae, near Teheran." He went up the mountains of that province for meditation and preached his faith for many years among hostile tribes till he came to the court of Kava Vishtaspa, King of Bactria in the north-east of Iran which is today Balkh in Afghanistan. Tradition says that Zarathushtra laughed when born in contrast to all children who cry. All Nature rejoiced in that there was born one who would conquer evil and teach mankind the way to righteousness and happiness. Many attempts were made on the life of the child by black magicians but without success. As a young boy, he was placed under able teachers, but they soon found that he was more advanced than they. Zarathustra spent several years in meditation and study pondering over the fundamentals of life and existence trying to find a rational explanation based upon the Law of Nature, *Asha*. We find in his writings question and answers as to who sustains this earth, according to what laws do the sun, moon and the stars move in such harmonious order, what are good and evil, the relative and the absolute, the fleeting and the eternal? Finally he discovers the perfection which lies in the Absolute as possessing perfect wisdom, which Reality he calls. Ahura Mazda, Lord of Life and Wisdom.

The religion of the Iranian peoples of his time was a primitive form of polytheism of Indo-Aryan origin based in part upon the *Rig. Veda*. There were many deities who were worshipped each of whom had his priests claiming special tribute. Each family had sacred idols to ward off disease and ill fortune. The life of an Iranian in Zarathushtra's time, and indeed, of all the peoples of India, Babylonia and Assyria, consisted in trying to wrest a bare subsistence from the soil and from their herds, trying to placate the many gods so as to avoid their wrath, and in meeting the demands of various kings and rulers. Each tribe had different rituals, sacred obligations and customs. Feuds were frequent. No explanations were given to inquisitive minds other than to follow ancient mandates and taboos. To this Eastern World, Zarathustra brought a new, universal concept of religion. His religion was not a set of superstitious rituals based on fears, but a universal call to a better life to be achieved with the aid of an *invisible* God of wisdom, truth, light and goodness. To those who enquired about the nature and the source of evil, he had an answer which, in essence, was adopted by most religions that followed his.

The tenets of the Zoroastrian religion are basically contained in the *Gathas*. Man is free to determine his life and faith. Through good thoughts, good words, good deeds, and purity of body and soul, he pays homage to and collaborates with Ahura Mazda, Lord of Life and Wisdom, in fulfilling the "divine purpose of His Holy Creation." By falsehood and wickedness, he increases the forces of Ahriman

the Spirit of Evil. The creed of Zarathushtra was an optimistic one, for it predicted the triumph of good over evil. The Zoroastrian religion spread rapidly in the time of Kava Vishtaspa, and in subsequent conquests which extended the Persian Empire from India and Babylon to the Greek frontiers. The "Laws of the Medes and the Persians" were known everywhere as the personification of the wisdom of the East, as can be seen in the writings of Plato, Pliny and Plutarch. It is said that Zarathushtra himself, still active in the affairs of state at the age of seventy-seven, was killed by a Turanian soldier during an attack on the city of Balkh.

There can be hardly any question that Zarathushtra was the first man we know who gave a definitely moral character and direction to religion, and at the same time, preached the doctrine of monotheism which offered an eternal foundation of reality to goodness as an ideal of perfection. Zarathushtra showed the path of freedom to man, the freedom of moral choice, freedom from blind obedience to unmeaning injunctions, freedom from the multiplicity of shrines which draw our worship away from the single-minded chastity of devotion. Zarathushtra preached that the moral worth of deed comes from the goodness of intention, and the value of his religion was in upholding man in his life of good thoughts, good words and good deeds. Zarathushtra was the first prophet in history who emancipated religion from the exclusive narrowness of the tribal god, and offered it to the universal man. Without doubt, such a high conception of religion of the ultimate ideal of perfection which must be revealed to all humanity, even at the cost of martyrdom, is unique in the history of any religion belonging to such a remote dawn of civilization,

The active, heroic aspects of the Zoroastrian religion reflects the character of the people themselves. They had zest in life, and confidence in their own strength. They accepted this world in all seriousness. By force of will and deeds of sacrifice, they tried to achieve *Haurvatat*, wholeness, well-being, in this world, and *Amerefatat* immortality, in the next.

The religion of Zarathushtra is enshrined in the *Gathas*, sacred songs divided into stanzas and strophes. According to Iranian tradition, Zarathushtra composed around 100,000 such strophes, but only a few hundred are left with us today. Even from these, we are able to glean the philosophy of Zarathushtra and the great truths he taught. The five *Gathas* which have come down to us are :

- 1) *Gatha Ahunavalli*, on freedom of choice;
- 2) *Gatha Ushtavaiti*, on supreme bliss (*ushta*);



- 3) *Gatha Spenta Mainyu*, on the Holy Spirit;
- 4) *Gatha Vohu Kshathra*, the gatha of the Good Kingdom;
- 5) *Gatha Vshishtoishiti*, the gatha of Sovereign Desire, the gatha of fulfilment.

The name given to each Gatha gives us a clue to its contents. The word, 'Ahu', means life, energy, the moving force which operates in Nature, so the *Ahunavaiti Gatha* deals not only with the laws which operate in Nature, but also with freedom of choice, the creation of the world and the origin of evil. A study of the laws underlying the universe gives rise to a sense of sublimity. Hence, the second Gatha, the *Ushtavaiti*, leads the reader to religious ecstasy showing the way to deep joy and happiness. The *Spenta Mainyu Gatha* deals with the essence of the absolute, the Spirit which permeates all existence and moves it. It unfolds the perfect wisdom which activates the Divine Plan. Man cannot comprehend this perfection and wholeness until he develops his own mental faculties and acquires moral strength. This is the gist of the fourth Gatha, the *Vohu Kshathra*. The fifth gatha, the *Vahishtoishiti*, is the gatha of fulfilment wherein a series of admonitions are laid down for man to follow.

With Ahura Mazda, the supreme Creator and Ruler of the Universe, six other great Beings are associated in the Gatha. These Beings were later named the *Amesha Spenta*, Holy Immortals, or Immortal Shining Ones. They are aspects of the Godhead, and are considered as divine energies radiating from Ahura Mazda in streams of light, as we find in the description of Asha, the Divine Law, given in the *Haptan Yasht*. These six Divine Powers or Energies, are :

*Asha*, the Divine Law, Truth, Righteousness and Justice;

*Vohu Mana*, the Good Mind, representing Divine love that transcends all bounds of time and space;

*Kshathra*, the Power and Majesty of Ahura Mazda, His Choice Kingdom, (*Kshathra vairyā*) the creative activity in the service of mankind;

*Aramaiti*, Divine Devotion, stability, loyalty, the love of God in our hearts. She reveals to us the Bhakti Marg, as in the *Gita*;

*Haurvatat*—Wholeness, Well-being, Perfection;

*Ameratat*—Immortality;

With Ahura Mazda at their head, the Seven Amesha Spenta are collectively known as the *Hafta Amshashpands*.

The language in which the *Gathas* are written is not known, but is loosely termed Gathia Avestan. It bears a strong affinity with Rig-Vedic Sanskrit. Scholars are led to surmise that both languages appear to have been derived from a common language which was in existence amongst the Aryans before they separated into different groups. The Avesta language in which most of the Zoroastrian Scriptures have come down to us came into existence some three hundred years after the era of Zarathushtra, according to earlier scholars. However the recent thinking of scholars on this subject of difference in the language of the *Gathas* and most of other Avesta is explained by the difference in locale. The *Gathas* were written, at least most of the *Gathas* (Divine Songs), when Holy Zarathushtra was meditating in a mountain (Ushidaren awakening), probably Demavand, whereas other Avesta were written, very likely by his immediate disciples, in Eastern Iran (Bactria). Lengthy commentaries were written on the *Gathas* and on the main principles of the religion. During this period, the *Yashts*, long poems of praise, and *Nyaeshes*, shorter poems of praise, were composed. In the Zoroastrian Calendar of thirty days, every day of the month has a name, and it is likely that one *Yasht* was devoted to each day. Only a few of the *Yashts* however, have survived.

Zarathushtra preached his religion in the Kyanian period of Iranian history. After the overthrow of that dynasty, c. 700 B.C., there were centuries of darkness and unsympathetic rule till Cyrus the Great established the famous Achaemenian Empire 2,500 years ago. There was a sudden revival of the Zoroastrian religion. Ancient texts, like the *Gathas*, and later Avesta writings were thrown together in one omnibus book named the *Yasna* or *Yezashne*, each chapter thereof being known as a *Ha*. In this Book of Worship the *Gathas* are not placed in running order, but interspersed twice by other chapters. The *Vispered* and *Vendidad* are writings of this period.

Upon the conquest of Iran by Alexander the Great in 330 B.C. there ensued another long and dark period for Iran. The entire library at Persepolis, containing a mammoth collection of books, manuscripts and other writings of learning along with the entire Avesta writings were burnt to ashes by Alexander. Legend has it that this was done by Alexander in a drunken state at the instance of his courtesan—Thafs who was enraged with the Iranians as her advances had been rejected by a respectable Iranian General. The Zoroastrian Scriptures were once again neglected and disjointed until another great Zoroastrian, Ardeshir Papakan founded the last Zoroastrian empire in Iran called the Sassanian Empire (226-651 A.D.). During this period, the Scriptures were once again gathered together, chiefly through the zeal of the great Dastur, Tansar, and recast. The court language of the Sassanians was Pahlvi, while the spoken language of the

common people was Pazand from which modern Persian is derived. It was during this period that a concise prayer book was composed called the *Khorda Avesta*, or more popularly, *Khordeh Avesta*, the Little Avesta. It contains not only Avestan prayers, but passages in Pazand also, with commentaries on astronomy (*Behram Yasht*), medicine (*Ardibehesht Yasht*), and cosmogony (*Farvardin* and *Zamved Yashts*).

The Sessanian Empire succumbed to the Arabs at the Battle of Nihavand in 641 A.D. The last Sassanian King, Yazdegard III, fled to Merv where he lived in hiding for ten years till he was discovered by one of his own generals and assassinated, by a lowly miller at the instigation of the Governor of Merv, Mahwi Suri also pronounced Mahui Suri, on Roj Aneran, Mah Khordad, English date 10th September 651 A.D. The Arab conquest was complete. Those who wished to remain Zoroastrians went to the mountains of Kohistan in Khorasan where they eked out a miserable existence for nearly one hundred years. Others were forcibly converted to Islam.

As Zarathushtra insisted upon active good towards one's fellow man, the motto of the religion became "Good thoughts, good words, good deeds." The two great emblems of the faith are *Hvare kshaeta*, the glorious Sun, and *Atar khvareh*, the radiant Fire. Ahura Mazda is said to have "the most luminous of all luminous bodies" which is "clothed in the most glorious of all glorious lights, the Sun" (*Haptan Yasht*). Fire is called "the holy sign" of Ahura Mazda, and is "the son of Ahura Mazda" (*Haptan Yasht*). Just as physical fire burns up any filth flung into it, but itself remains pure and bright, even so, the Fire of Thought must burn up the Lie, the *Druj*, in our hearts and minds so that thought, word and deed may be dedicated to *Asha*, the Truth. Hence, Zoroastrians build Fire Temples as places of worship. There are three grades of Fire Temples: *Atash Behram*; *Atash Adaran*, *Agvary* or *Dar-e-Meher*; and *Atash Dadgah* or the household fire in every Zoroastrian home. The first *Atash Behram* was consecrated in 790 A.D. in Sanjan, from the *Alat* (instruments) which the Parsis had brought with them from Khorasan. It was this Sacred Fire kindled after their coming to India. The *Iran Shah*, which is to this day held in special reverence by the Parsis of India. After many vicissitudes the Holy *Iran Shah* came to rest in 1742 A.D. in Udvada, a small village about 100 miles from Bombay to which the Parsis make pilgrimages from India, and from other countries of the world.

As Zarathushtra laid such emphasis on freedom of choice, a child born of Zoroastrian parents is not considered a Zoroastrian till he is initiated into the fold by the *Navjote* ceremony. The word, 'Navjote' means a new initiate who offers Zoroastrian prayers. The *Navjote* Ceremony in Iran is known as *Nozad* (a

new birth) ceremony, on the supposition that the soul is now born into a new life of spiritual activities. The ceremony of initiation consists of the investiture of the child with the sacred shirt called *Sudreh*, and a sacred thread called *Kusti*. The Navjote ceremony among the Parsis corresponds to the confirmation ceremony among the Christians, except that with Zoroastrians, the Navjote is obligatory. It is performed at any time after attaining the age of seven and before completing the age of fifteen, and usually performed at the age of seven or nine or eleven. Therefore, the child continues to wear the *Sudreh* and *Kusti*, and perform the *Kusti* ritual with the prescribed prayers, throughout life. The *Sudreh* is made of pure, white muslin or cotton, while the *Kusti* is woven of seventy-two threads of fine, lamb's wool; representing the 72 chapters of the *Yasna*, the most sacred of our texts because it contains the *Gathas* of Zarathushtra. In the Pahlavi Texts, the *Sudreh* or *Sudra*, is described as "*Vohu Manik Vastra*", the Garment of Good Mind. It has a very small pocket in front called the *Kisseh-i-Kerfeh*, or pocket of good deeds. This is intended to be a constant reminder to every Zoroastrian to offer up to his Maker, every night, at least one square inch of good he has tried to perform during the day. The word, '*Kusti*' means a waist band. Being tied thrice round the waist, it points to the trinity of good thoughts, good words, good deeds. These form a barrier insulating the individual from all that is evil.

After the Navjote, the next most important ceremony in the life of a Zoroastrian is usually that of marriage.

In former times, the ceremony began with the young couple sitting facing each other. The officiating priest would then place a cloth between them and tie the ends round their chairs. He would then take the bride's right hand and place it in the groom's right hand and tie their hands seven times with a piece of twine. An assistant priest, holding the *Afarghan*, would stand beside the senior priest. Prayers would then be recited. At a signal from the officiating priest, the assistant fed the fire with sandalwood and incense. At this point, the cloth curtain between the young couple was removed, and everyone clapped their hands. The bride and groom threw a fistful of uncooked rice which they had been holding in their left hands on each other. This action symbolised prosperity. After this, the marriage ceremony continued as prescribed.

Today, the bride and groom sit side by side during the marriage ceremony. The parents and relatives of the couple sit behind their respective children. Beside them stand the witness to the marriage. Two priests stand in front of the couple and the ceremony begins. During the recital of the legal formula, the priest asks the witness on behalf of the groom's family, the following :

"In the presence of this company that has met together in the city of.....



on.....day of.....in the year .....of Emperor Yazdegard of the Sassanian Dynasty of auspicious Iran, say whether you have agreed to take this maiden.....by name, in marriage for this bridegroom, in accordance with the rites and rules of the Mazdaysnans promising to pay her 2,000 *dirams* of pure white silver, and two *dinars* of real gold of the Nishapur coinage?"

Then the witness from the bride's side is asked : "Have you and your family, with righteous mind, and truthful thoughts, words and actions, and for the increase of righteousness, agreed to give for ever this bride in marriage to.....?" The witness replies: "I have agreed"

Next follows the most crucial part of the ceremony. The priest turns first to the groom, than to the bride and asks:

"Have you chosen to enter into this contract of marriage up to the end of your life with righteous mind?"

The entire formula is repeated thrice, and thrice both bride and groom must reply: "*Pasande Kardam*" (I approve). If either party refuses to answer, the marriage ceremony is interrupted there and then, and no priest dare marry the couple against their wish.

Next follow some beautiful admonitions and benedictions in Pazand and Avesta. The entire ceremony is recited even in Sanskrit, recalling the early days of the Parsi settlers in India when Sanskrit was the language of educated Hindus. While reciting these benedictions, the priests throw grains of uncooked rice on the couple to symbolise prosperity and plenty. The ceremony concludes with a final blessing.

The priests are then presented with beautiful Kashmir shawls and some cash, After embracing their parents, the couple leave and go to the Fire Temple to pay their homage to the sacred fire. Again, prayers are said and sandalwood and incense offered to the fire, and the *Atash Nvaesh* recited.

The couple now return to the assembly where they meet their guests.

When the guests have departed, and the family have had their dinner, the bride goes to the groom's house, accompanied by members of her family. She holds a small wick lamp in a protective silver vase. The light should not go out on the way to her new home. At the threshold, her husband awaits her. He lifts her over the lintel, or else she crosses it, right foot first. The little wick lamp

is kept burning in the bridal chamber all night.<sup>(1)</sup>

Some of the most beautiful prayers are connected with the funeral ceremonies of the Zoroastrians which continue for four consecutive days. Again, on the tenth day after death, certain prayers are recited both in the home and in the Fire Temple. After a month, prayers are again recited, and then annually on the death anniversary. The dead body is disposed of in Towers of Silence on the top of a hill. The flesh is devoured by birds of prey, and after a few days, the bones are lowered into deep wells at the bottom of which are layers of charcoal, lime and other minerals which slowly dissolve the bones. Thus the mortal remains of the individual are disposed of in a most hygienic manner.

There are various other religious ceremonies, such as the consecration of a Fire Temple, purificatory ceremonies like the *Riman*, ceremonies in commemoration of the righteous dead such as the *Muktad*, and elaborate ceremonies like the *Izashne*.

The term 'Parsi' is derived from *Parsa*, the name of a province in south-western Iran in ancient times. *Parsa* was used also for the people of the province and the adjectival form *Parsik* is used for the people as well as the language of the province of Pars. When Cyrus, a celebrated resident of Pars, rose to power in his home-province in the 6th century B.C. and later extended his sovereignty over the whole of Iran, the term 'Parsis' was applied to the whole of the country. As explained above, the word 'Parsi' literally means 'a resident of Pars'. It is, therefore, originally an ethnic term and it was generally applied to the people of Pars. But later the term acquired a religious connotation also and it was used for the Zoroastrian residents of Pars. After the downfall of the Sasanian Empire and the Arab conquest of Iran, the term 'Parsi' was used for those residents of Iran who remained faithful to their ancestral Faith, namely Zoroastrian Religion. The term was specially used for the Zoroastrians of Iran to distinguish them from those Iranians who discarded their ancestral Faith and embraced Islam. Since those days the term 'Parsi' refers to the original residents of Iran and their descendants professing the Zoroastrian Religion, and living in Iran, India and elsewhere.<sup>(2)</sup>

Let us now turn to the Parsis in India. Around 766 A.D. a small group of Iranian Zoroastrians set sail in open sailing vessels, and landed at Div or Diu, a tiny island at the tip of the Kathiawar coast. There they settled for nineteen years to practise their faith in peace. For some obscure reason, they again set sail in open sailing vessels and landed at the fishing village of Sanjan where Jadi Rana or Jadhav Rana, gave them refuge.

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(1) See Nanavutty (Pilloo), *THE PARSIS*—National Book Trust, India, New Delhi, 1977. pp. 25-27.

(2) Dr. Mirza's *OUTLINES OF PARSI HISTORY*—pp. 2-4.

The Parsis spread in small colonies all along the west coast of Gujarat as we learn from the only written document on the early history of the Parsis, the *Kissa-i-Sanjan*, the Story of Sanjan, a chronicle in Persian couplets by Behman Kaikobad Sanjana, a Dastur or High Priest, of Navsari, and dated 1600. Despite its late date, and some discrepancies, the *Kissa* is a very valuable document, more so as we have no earlier testimony on the subject. Between the 8th and 15th centuries, the Parsis settled in various small towns on the Gujarat coast.

The Parsis settled down as farmers and agriculturists, fruit growers, toddy planters, carpenters and weavers.

Not only were they excellent weavers, but they gave India three of her most ancient crafts, namely the *Surti ghat*, the *garo* and the *tanchol*. The *Surti ghat* is a soft silk with a satin finish on one side. In the past, the thread was woven by little children, aged four to six years, in damp, half-lit cellars, after which the thread was slowly exposed to the light. The hand-woven silk was then dyed in vegetable dyes concocted from powdered roots and herbs, the favourite colours being a vivid tomato red, Tyrian purple, bright pink, dove grey and saffron. The material thus woven was so strong that it was known as *Surti ghat*, the Surat mountain, the weavers coming from that town. Today, textile factories in Surat and Ahmedabad produce *Surti Ghat* by the yard, but the texture is not so fine, nor the colours as rich as the ancient handwoven specimens.

The *garo* and the *tanchol* are both crafts originally imported from China. The *garo* is a fine silk with elaborate Chinese embroidery all over the sari. The motifs are birds, animals, flowers, pagodas and Chinese gardens. The *sali garo* gives the impression of fine twigs being woven into the material. Hence its name, *sali* meaning a twig. This effect was produced by removing a single thread every twentieth of an inch. The *sali garo* was usually plain, with beautiful, silk embroidered borders, often worked in *petit point*. The word, *garo*, means to strain through a cloth or sieve. The secret of this craft seems to be lost, for today, the only *garos* that exist are fifty to eighty years, old, having come down from grandmother to grandchildren in Parsi families whose ancestors once had a lucrative trade with China. Like the *Surti ghat* the *garo* is also found in deep, rich tones, such as, purple wine red, black, russet, though white cream coloured *garos* also exist.

The *tanchol* is a fine, silk brocade with floral designs woven in. Three Parsis, brothers, learnt the secret of its weaving after a prolonged stay in China. They started a weaving centre of their own in Surat. They were known locally as *tanchol* the three Chinamen, from *tan* meaning three, and *choi* meaning Chinese. Their surname was Joshi, and for years the weaving centre was known as

Joshi-ni-haveli, the Joshi mansion. Their descendant, Kaikhushrau Sorabji Joshi (d. 1958), had his weaving centre in the Turkwadi suburb of the Moglisarai district of Surat. Saris woven in this rich brocade were worn only on auspicious occasions such as Navjotes and weddings. Joshi looked after his craftsmen as if they were members of his family. His fame, and that of his craftsmen, spread all over India and reached the ears of Gandhiji. He immediately set off, on foot, to visit the humble weaving centre. He was so gratified with what he saw that he slapped Joshi on the back and announced that when Independence had been won, Joshi would be invited by the Indian Government to organise *Tanchoi* weaving centres throughout the country. Gandhiji kept his promise. By 1948, Joshi was employed as a senior official of the All India Handicrafts Board. Before he died, Joshi lived to see the *tanchoi* sari woven in ever new and lovely designs in the finest of fine brocade in weaving centres which stretch from Kashmir to Kanya Kumari. Surat and Hyderabad, however, take the lead in this handicraft. <sup>(3)</sup>

A new era in the history of the Parsis begins with the rise of British and Portuguese power in India and the development of Bombay. The Parsis became entrepreneurs and leading businessmen and industrialists.

The three Parsis most closely associated with the Indian National Movement in the nineteenth century were Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917), Sir Pherozeshah Mehta (1845-1915), and Sir Dinshaw Wacha (1844-1936).

The first Parsi woman to carve for herself an honoured niche in the national movement was Bhikaiji Cama (1861-1936). The turning point in her life came when she attended the first historic session of the Congress in Bombay. From that moment she became an ardent patriot. Another well-known freedom fighter was Rustomji Jivanji Chorkhodu (1864-1924). Rustomji joined the Satyagraha Movement in Africa, started by Gandhiji in 1894, and became an ardent follower of the Mahatma. The greatest service Rustomji performed was saving the life of Gandhiji. On his second visit to Durban, when Gandhiji was in imminent danger of being lynched by an irate mob, Rustomji sheltered him and smuggled him to safety at the risk of his own life and property. The history of the political freedom movement in India is studded with Parsi names, too numerous to mention individually.

In commerce and industry, the names of the Wadias, the Banajis, the Jeejeebhoyes, the Petits, the Jehangirs, the Tatas deserve mentioning. They were the pioneers of the ship building industry, the textile industry, the iron and steel industry, the hydro-electric industry, the banking industry, etc. After the House of Tata, the next largest Industrial organisation run by Parsis is the Godrej organisation which was the first Indian manufacturer of a fire-proof lining for safes, and of soaps etc.

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(3) See Nanavutty (Piloo), *The Parsis—National Book Trust, India, New Delhi, 1977*, pp. 45-47.



In the professions several Parsis excelled. In the legal profession Sir Dinshah F. Mulla rose to be a Member of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in England in 1930. Mr. Nani Palkhiwala is another famous Parsi name in the legal profession. In the Civil Services many Parsis have held and continue to hold high offices. In the Armed Forces at one time or the other the Chiefs of the three Services have been Parsis, the most famous of them being Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw. In medicine and science, there are famous names like Dr. Homi Jehangir Bhabha, Dr. D.N. Wadia, Dr. Homi Sethna, Dr. Jal Paymaster, Dr. Rustom Jal Vakil, Dr. Adarbad Irani, Dr. S.P. Shroff, etc. Parsis provided three well known painters in Shiavax Chavda, Jehangir Sabawala and Homi J. Bhabha. Amongst sculptors there are widely known names, such as the late Ardeshir M. Davierwala and Piloo Pochkhanawala. Parsis have also played a prominent role in the development of western music in India. The Parsi with an international reputation in the world of western music is the young conductor, Zubin Mehta. The Parsis were once again pioneers in the development of the theatre in India, as also the development of the cinema. Similarly in literature and journalism there are many widely known Parsis.

Thanks to the tolerance and hospitality of the people of India, the Parsis have been able to preserve their ancient religion and their own individual way of life for nearly 8,000 years. According to the 1977 Year Book of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, there were, in June 1976, around 228,480 Zoroastrians in the world. Of these, 224,700 are in Asia, 3,000 in Europe, 250 in North America, and 530 in Africa. The Parsi population in India is estimated at about 80,000 to 85,000. Pakistan has around 6,000, while Iran has 25,000 Zoroastrians. With the revival of the ancient Iranian culture and philosophy in modern Iran, it can be said, without fear of contradiction, that a very large number of Iranians are Zoroastrian by inclination though not by religion.

Today, the community faces many serious problems. In a secular democracy after Independence the importance of religion has diminished. There is a decline in the population to about 85,000 in the whole of India. Emigration accounts for only a small fraction of the dwindling numbers. Late marriages, inter-marriages and conversion to other faiths account for the rest. Centuries of inbreeding have also reduced the fertility rate among the Parsis. An acute shortage of low cost housing is aggravating the situation. There is a need for overhauling the laws governing the Parsis. There is also the need for broadening the franchise for election to the office of Trustees of the Bombay Punchayat. The indifference and ignorance prevailing among the Parsis regarding their spiritual heritage must be replaced by a deep and full understanding of the teachings of their Prophet Zarathushtra. Only then will Parsis be able to contribute their best to this great land which has been their home for nearly 1400 years.



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# The Psychology of the 'Diminishing' Numbers

Dr. S. Bhatia

The Parsee community, in the recent past, has been discussing with much concern the nature of some of the problems facing it in the context of its diminishing numbers over the last few decades. There have been two or three seminars on the subject in Delhi, the reports of which I have read with an intellectual interest. Mr. Nargolwala has written letters to a Parsee newspaper on the subject of conversion; other enlightened members of the community have voiced their views in forums, both formal and informal.

The present "concern," taken at its face value, augurs well for the minority community, for it is a sure sign of a high degree of participation by the members of the community. This will, in itself, prove beneficial to the community, as more and more members do feel that there is a need to encourage public discussion on the community itself. Such moments have tended to elevate the members' obligations to their own community and religion.

I do have some views on the subject of the diminishing members in the Parsee community; I would not say that these views are in any form original. They have the merit (or demerit;) of views belonging to a "sahridaya" (a Sanskrit term used in literary appreciation, it means "a sympathetic watcher"). I have formulated these views after many pleasant and enriching exchanges with a few Parsee friends in Delhi; my obligation to them is obvious.

Let me take the point of conversion first of all. The community leadership apparently considers it to be one of the ways by which the numbers can be increased, thus ensuring a long-term survival. The discussion seems to have rested largely in the area of the legality and otherwise of conversion within the tenets of the laws and religious practices governing the Parsee community. The multipli-



city of views is likely to be there in the absence of any tried out case in a court of law. I should have, however, thought that the issue of conversion had been visualized in the context of its potential "users" or the new entrants to the Parsee community. Why should conversion be a successful way of attracting members to a minority community? There are two ways of looking at it; there are historical precedents if we are viewing the problem of conversion in massive numbers, and, there are minor legal irritants for a marginal number of cases.

Let us take the case of conversion in large numbers. Recent history demonstrates that large scale conversion of people from one religion into another has either been achieved by political and military force or by economic and social allurements. The reign of Aurangzeb provided a clear instance of conversion by force, the force of the monarchical rule and the zeal of a religious fanatic. A very large number of non-Muslims were converted to Islam, even though the converts were unwilling. The other mammoth example of conversion pertains to the influence of the Christian missionaries all over the world. The Christian missionaries were able to wield considerable influence by exposing people backward in terms social, economic, and political to the benefits of the process of modernization ensuing from literacy, urbanization, employment, etc. A third instance of conversion, and possibly a case of voluntary conversion at that, is available in some of the communities in India which have been socially discriminated against. These are communities which have chosen Buddhism as their religion to escape socially undesirable practices of untouchability and low castes.

I do not think I need to go into the details of these instances; the instances are only reminders of parallel practices with a view to help us understand the present problem. I am saying all this because there is a possibility of quibbling about the details a bit here and a bit there. The crucial point lies in a strong argument that conversion as a practice is adopted largely by those people who are looking for or expect a "reward", be it social or economic. The converted population, particularly that which comes to the fold of the community in the hope of rewards, is not likely to be as religiously devout or community-oriented as the present members of a minority community. The converts-to-be have apparently been exposed to the socio-cultural surroundings of their earlier community and religion; socio-cultural traits are deeply ingrained and life-styles and values are pre-determined. The only possibility of a total assimilation arises in case of the infant-converts, who will come to the community with a "clean slate" of socio-cultural and value stock. An adult professing to convert to another religion may do so on account of the humane and ennobling traits of a particular religion; this does not, however, imply that the adult concerned has imbibed the life-styles and values of the particular community as well. Religion is, after all, a heightened

and idealistic vision of a community's life styles and values; not all members of a given community are able to adopt these into practice. The tendency to flee from one's religion arises largely from one's disgust at the life styles and values of one's community, the popularity of such cults as the Hare Krishna movement is a case in instance. These are young people disgusted with the hypocrisy inherent in the life styles of their community; they have sought to express their protest against the hypocrisy by joining a new religion. This should not, however, be taken to mean that they have adopted the Hindu life styles. This phenomenon only demonstrates that the average human being finds it very difficult to seek solace in the religion followed by his community, when the community itself is hypocritical in its values and life styles. Religion and community have come to be closely identified with each other; if human beings were to realize that the religious level of existence is a heightened form of existence (as compared to the communal one), the problem of leaving one's religion will not arise.

The problem of mass scale conversion, to my mind, bears lesser desirability than possibility. It is less desirable because it is likely to have an adverse influence on the quality of communal life. The commonality in values and life styles prevalent among the members of a minority community is likely to be weakened by an intrusion of the non-oriented members.

The problem of marginal cases is not one of conversion, but an instance of legal irritants and social attitudes. The case of the Parsee man with a non-Parsee woman or of the Parsee woman with a non-Parsee man can either be tried out in a court of law or by initiating a change in social attitudes. Legal aspects apart, the attitudes of the applicants for entry into the community and of the community in general are more vital questions. It is imperative to know whether the Parsee father or the Parsee mother (in question here) chose to retain her religious identity even when marrying into a non-Parsee family. This should be a good indicator of finding out whether the case has some merit. I would not like to discuss the problem of social attitudes in the article; I feel that the issue requires a separate article/paper.

One of the courses left for ensuring addition to the "diminishing" numbers of the community is then "conversion of infants"; this is really an instance of adoption, not conversion. It can either be adoption from within the community or from outside the community. The social acceptability of adoption from within the community is likely to be higher than the one from outside the community. The degree of economic prosperity enjoyed by the Parsee community has its own divergences; those in the higher income brackets seem to have fewer children and vice versa. There must be opportunities for adopting children from poorer Parsee

homes, particularly from families which have a larger number of children. It may either take the form of legal adoption wherein the child will live in a new home, or individual and community-sponsorship wherein the child stays in his original home while enjoying the economic backing for his upbringing and education.

The quality of community life is likely to improve with the measure of intra-community adoption than with the inter-community adoption. The child is likely to have religious moorings within the community; he is likely to grow up into a good specimen of community life. It is only through the original allegiance to one's own religion that a human being comes to acquire tolerance towards and appreciation of other religions. I cannot really express this point as eloquently and with as much conviction as Ervaed Daraius E. Bagli did at the Interreligious conference at the Y.M.C.A. New Delhi, this year.

I may incidentally voice another view. The norm of a small family seems to be closely interlinked with the degree of modernization, economic prosperity and high degree of literacy. I think that the norm is likely to continue in developing countries where highly-specialized technology is beginning to filter in all walks of life. The dissolution of the joint family or the clan and the cult of individualism is likely to keep the family small in the coming decades. Developed nations such as the USA are beginning to talk of ZPG (zero population growth); the ideal of a prosperous family seems to be a small-sized family. One of the measures that a minority community can initiate is to raise the level of living of its poorer sections; many such people are likely to acquire their own small-sized families thus adding to the "diminishing" numbers. Such well-looked-after young people are likely to add to the quality of life in the community and in the nation.



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## HIS CREATION

Let there be no difference  
    between man and woman,  
Let there be no difference  
    between friend and foe,  
Let there be no difference  
    between skin light and dark,  
Let there be no difference  
    between rich and poor,  
Let there be no difference  
    between diamond and coal,  
As God created them all  
    For us to choose the right from wrong.  
Let us then be kind and forgiving  
    To creatures all

### Almighty & My Mighty Eucalyptus

My eucalyptus stands erect,  
    Like an upright soul;  
The wind blows and  
    It sways to and fro.  
  
Like the Maiden's hair,  
    The leaves appear to blow,  
The branches dancing and prancing  
    With the rhythm and the glow;

But lo ! it's still !  
    To the Lord's will,  
The world may swirl,  
    But not a leaf shall stir.

A sapling planted nine years ago, now a magnificent tree, towering about 36 feet tall, and twenty one inches in diameter, standing at the gate like a cenatour, casting shadows in space and marking time !

## My Delhi

Tuk, Tuk, Tuk goes the hammer,  
Clik, clik, clik goes the chisel,  
Kitiki, kitiki, kit goes the stone cutter  
Poo, poo, poo, goes the horn,  
All in this city old.

The placid colourful peasants,  
Pass by erect with load over-head.  
Children innocently trail along,  
Gardeners push their greenary cart,  
All in this city of old.

The cars vizz by,  
The scooters scoot,  
The cycle-rickshaw pulls on,  
Cyclists buzz like the bee  
All in this city of old.

Life goes on,  
The kites in the sky,  
Avenues of trees around  
Birds in the bushes,  
All in this city of old.

Grass under your feet,  
Flowers surround you,  
Kittens prancing around  
Birds whistling their tunes  
Peace and tranquility at home  
All in this kingdom of God.

Mehroo J. Wadia

# THE HAND

By

Dinaz Chhappgar

It was a dull black night, clouded over, thundery, a night perfect for staying indoors — a perfect night for a hold-up. And that was exactly what was in the mind of Phiroz and Behram. Both believed in God helping those who help themselves. They had come out to the greatest shopping centre in town to help themselves.

Their first target was a jewellery shop. Not a very big or expensive one, but promising some money which our two friends were in sore need of.

The rendez-vous was successful. They filled their pockets with mediocre chains, brooches, bracelets,—the lot.

Now where to? Behram, the brainer one, insisted on not staying too long in the vicinity so as to attract notice. Phiroz knew of a way through the back and out into the alley. Both made their way there. The alley led to a dead end but some genius had made a hole big enough to pass through. Through this the two went and, hugging the shadows by the walls, they made their way. All of a sudden there was a knock at Phiroz's head. He froze. By now his eyes were trained enough to the dark to make out the shape of a revolver.

Behram reached up and tried to help his friend by knocking the revolver out of the seemingly detached hand. No luck — someone else must have been hiding in the shadows. His hand brushed against something moving and then he felt a sudden burning pain shoot up his arm. What was born in his throat as a stifled cry came out in a shout of pain. The pain in his arm made him forget where he was and why he was there. Discretion was blown to the winds. He set up enough noise to wake up the dead.

Small wonder then when this was answered in the form of two sturdily built men, upholders and protectors of law, policemen on their daily beat. As soon as his numbed brain started functioning again, Phiroz tried to slink off, but too late! He was trapped without a hope of running.

The concern of the police was genuine but so was their curiosity. Why were they there at that time of night? What had happened to merit the loud shouts for help? Phiroz tried to bluster his way through the cross-examination while Behram had no thoughts for anything except his injured arm.

These two gentlemen of law seemed to find no difficulty in arriving to the decision that "they seemed to be up to no good" and "the whole thing looked mighty suspicious". Their bulging pockets drew attention to themselves. Upon examination they gave out a big enough pile of the jewellery.

By now a strange noise which had been slowly rising for some time was heard and attended to. Sounded rather like a suspicious machine, and rather near at hand. A quick flashing of the torch soon yielded the source of the sound as well as the cause of Behram's "shot" — a disturbed hive of bees. It also brought up something else to light. The hand holding the gun, still in the same position—a sign outside a toy shop to catch the eye of young would-be gangsters.

But one thing Phiroz and Behram learned from this. God may help but it is only the Devil who looks after his own.



## A Socio-Economic Survey of the Parsi Community in Delhi

AVA KHULLAR

For some time past, there has been a growing sense of concern among an involved group of Parsis, regarding several grave and basic problems confronting the community. Uptil recently some voices had been raised in alarm, some discussions held, but with very little impact on the total body of the community in terms of factual awareness of the community's present situation and its likely trends for the future. In the midst of our urban, cosmopolitan, busy life style, we have not had a chance to contemplate or concern ourselves with that which should touch us very close—for it concerns ourselves, not as separate individuals, but as members making up a small but significant community: the Parsis. Infact while some sections do get concerned over controversial issues, there appears to be a blissful, unawareness of issues that are vital.

As a result of this growing concern, several issues were discussed at the meeting of The Federation of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, North and East Zone, hosted by the Delhi Parsi Anjuman in January 1977, followed by a seminar organised by the Delhi Anjuman in April 1977 to continue the discussion process started in January.

The feeling was expressed at the April meeting that as a first step towards understanding the issues facing the community it was necessary to have sound factual data regarding the community's present condition. There are available some studies and writings pertaining to the Parsis, but these have been mainly of a descriptive nature, covering the history, religion, customs etc. of the community. Ekehard Kulke's *The Parsees of India* and Pilloo Nanavathy's *The Parsis* are two of the most recent books falling in this category. The focus of these studies as well as several earlier studies, mainly by Parsis, has been that of giving a general overall picture of the community and not focussing on any specific problem of the community. Among the very meagre work done under the latter category, namely of dealing with specific concerns of the community, the earliest

and pioneering work is that of Sapur Desai, who in his *A community at the Cross Road*, written about 30 years ago, in 1948, and some shorter papers written subsequently, raised a voice of alarm at the serious demographic decline in the community. An interesting paper by Leela Visaria on this subject had also appeared in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 1974, entitled "Demographic Transition Among Parsis, 1881-1971". While these studies are very useful, there has been no serious and systematic effort made to get factual data, in a scientific manner, regarding not only the demographic aspect, but other aspects of the community about which there is, or should be, growing concern.

It was in this context that a proposal to do a socio-economic survey of the Parsis of Delhi was considered and approved. It was felt that the Delhi study would not only bring about a factual understanding of the community's socio-economic situation and yield useful information about various demographic and socio-economic trends, but it would also be a pioneering study which could be followed by similar studies of Parsi communities in other urban, semi-urban centres.

Such a programme of scientific research could only be handled by competent social scientists and the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) Delhi, a highly reputed social science research centre, supported by the Government of India, which is one of the leading centres specializing in empirical and survey research, was approached to conduct this study under the sponsorship of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman. The Centre agreed to undertake the survey.

The major thrust of the Delhi study would be to inquire into three major areas of concern.

1) Among the trends causing anxiety, the most ominous is a steady decline in population. This for a small community like the Parsis may well prove fatal for it for sheer survival. According to all India Census figures the Parsis reached their maximum number in 1941, when they numbered 1,14,890. Between 1941 and 1951, the next decennial census, India was partitioned and the census figures recorded a population of 1,11,791 in 1951. Since then, there has been on an average a 1 per cent decrease in the population each year, or 10 per cent decrease for every decennial census. We are told by one scholar that:

"If the population of the Parsees continues to decline at the rate it is doing since 1951, it would reach half its present size around 2040 A.D. and one-fourth its size during 2110. Its eventual extinction therefore appears a distant but a distinct possibility."

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This "distinct possibility" is frightening indeed!

We hear of late marriages, no marriages, marriages outside the community prevalence of small family norms, and immigration to other countries, as the probable reasons for a declining population, but there is no hard data, collected in a scientific manner which give a clear indication of the magnitude or otherwise of these trends; are we fearing more than facts will justify, or will the data show with further clarity the enormous gravity of the situation. The survey will give a correct perspective.

2) Another disturbing trend is the apparent declining economic health of the community. One interesting essay on the subject says:

"A community of adventurous businessmen and entrepreneurs who generated enough wealth to benefit not only their own members but other communities as well, it is now largely a community of job holders in the middle and lower managerial levels of companies, who make just enough to raise their own families. An increasing percentage is sliding from upper-middle to middle to lower-middle incomes and into various shades of poverty."

We still have the big names in government, the defense services, prosperous lawyers, doctors, industrialists, diplomats, but perhaps, for the average member of the community, the above hypothesis may prove correct. A socio-economic survey would throw light on this.

Shapur Desai in his book, mentioned earlier, states the following while discussing differential fertility rates:

"If the present wheel of fortune continues to turn in a manner that is detrimental to the maintenance of abler classes, we shall continue to witness a slow accretion of the lower classes in the lowest stratum, a diminution of the medium classes at a steady pace and a quick throwing out of the rich and higher middle classes, who fail to leave any issue behind to continue the line. Parsi society today is revolving rapidly. The tangential, centripetal and centrifugal forces, released as it were in the process of revolution, are today encompassing the whole social structure. The childless rich are thrown out, the middle class is sagging and the poor are gravitating lower and lower. *In its biological career the Parsi community has arrived at a cross-road.* Let it pause and think which way it is going to take."

One can see the interrelation between the declining population and a decline in the general economic condition of the community.



3) Also noticeable is a lack of cohesiveness, of confidence, of a feeling of identity and of a sense of direction within the community. Some probe into the attitudes of the Parsis surveyed would give further clarity to this assumption. (The significance of religion as a cohesive factor would need to be taken into consideration here.)

Once the Delhi study is completed it is our hope, as mentioned earlier, that it would be followed up with very useful and interesting comparative studies of the Parsi community say for example in three different milieus—Delhi, representing a mobile and progressive section; Bombay, as the heartland of the Parsees and to a great extent representing an orthodox section; and Surat/Baruch as representing a semi-urban-rural section.

To this end, the Delhi study would be a good beginning. Not only would it be a complete study in itself, but its data and findings could later be used for a wider comparative study.

One special consideration concerned the planning of the survey. Namely, how to make this survey something more than an academic exercise. Traditional research would require that the study is entrusted to social scientists who function as "outsiders" to the group being researched, carry out the research on the basis of their awareness of the problem, as defined by them and with objectives as perceived by them, collect data and then prepare the report. Such a document may become, in fact it does often become, a cold document lacking commitment to implementing its findings or creating knowledge and awareness of the problem among those who matter most—the Parsees themselves.

As a step towards remedying, this situation, the social scientists are keeping in touch with a small group of Parsis, forming a committee to co-ordinate with the social scientists during the course of the study. The role of this group is important in two respects: 1) to give the social scientists a more insightful feeling about the community being studied and 2) acting as a bridge between the research being done and the members of the community, thereby spreading a sense of involvement of a wider group of Parsees. If the study is able to create a sense of awareness among the Parsees about the crucial issues facing them, that in itself will be a meaningful achievement.

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# An Evening of Russian Ballet

by

**ZERIN D. MANEKSHAW**

At the impressionable age of seven, I was possessed by the idea of becoming a ballet dancer.

It came about on the fateful day when my parents bought tickets for an evening's show at Sapru House, this was 'The Sleeping Beauty' which was performed by a famous ballet troupe from Russia. I was really excited as I was fond of Indian dancing, having learnt Kathak for some time.

The hall was packed when we reached our seats. The show started at 6.30 p.m. The lighting effect was superb and it was simply fascinating watching the dancers deftly and effortlessly manoeuvring their seemingly weightless bodies.

I sat there absolutely rigid, glued to my seat, every movement of the dancers had rhythm in it and I wanted to get up and dance, all I needed was a pair of shoes to "set my feet a dancing, a dancing, a dancing on my way home."

This performance had a profound impact on me. I started cutting and collecting photographs of world famous ballet dancers Dame Margot Fontayn, Alexander Nikolai etc. from magazines, books and keeping an open eye for all T.V. programmes which presented ballet performances.

I remember requesting my aunt who was going abroad to get me a ballerina's costume and shoes, which cost my parents a small fortune and which has remained locked in my cupboard as a secret treasure which I hope I will have the opportunity to use some time in life.

It was now my one and only cherished dream—wanting to be like one of these famous dancers someday. This dream however could not be nurtured as there are no ballet dancing centres at Delhi.

The dream persists, yet, with the passing of years, the muscles are no longer that flexible nor the joints that pliable that ballet demands—but the hope remains that someday, in the not too distant a future, after finishing my studies, I can go abroad and fulfill the dream that began on an evening at Sapru House.

The statement about ownership and other particulars about the newspaper entitled Dipanjali, Regd. No. R. N. 7051/62 as required to be published under section 19 D. Sub-section (b) of the Press and Registration of Books Act read with rule 6 of the Registration of Newspaper (Central) Rules 1956 (as amended).

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Bahadurshah Zafar Marg, New Delhi-110001.

I, D.E. Mistry, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Sd/- D.E. Mistry  
Signature of Publisher



Members are requested to intimate changes of address and telephone Nos. immediately to the Honorary Secretary, Mr. K. R. Parekh on any of the undermentioned telephone Nos.

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## Delhi Parsi Anjuman

### Annual Report for the Year 1976-77

I have pleasure in presenting this Report on the affairs of the Anjuman during the year 1976-77. This has been a year during which the multifarious activities of the Anjuman have been well sustained and the year has been one of progress in social, cultural and other activities of the Anjuman. The financial position of the Anjuman continues to show progress and is very satisfactory.

#### 2. BOARD OF TRUSTEES.

- (i) On the conclusion of elections at the last Annual General Meeting, the Board of Trustees consisted of the following :—

Mr. S.D. Nargolwala	President
Mr. Zal Noshervanji	Vice-President
Mr. M.E. Bharucha	Honorary Treasurer
Mr. K.R. Parakh	Honorary Secretary
Miss Hilla B. Sidhwa	Honorary joint Secretary
Mr. S.J. Dinshaw	Trustee
Mr. H.K. Press	Trustee
Mr. Dadi E. Mistry	Trustee
Mr. B.P. Dumasia	Trustee

(ii) Mr. M.E. Bharucha, Hony. Treasurer, has since resigned. The Board filled up his vacancy by the nomination of Mr. N.B. Captain on 25.7.1976 under Rule 17 of the Rules and Regulations of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman.

(iii) Mrs. A.S. Majoo was co-opted as Trustee for the year under Rule 16 of the Rules and Regulations of the Anjuman. Under the same rule the Board had proposed to coopt Mrs. Nancy Cursetji as another Trustee subject to her consent. On receipt of her consent on 20.6.1976, the Board co-opted Mrs. Cursetji as Trustee. Later on, Mrs. Cursetji resigned on 14.11.76. The Board thereafter co-opted Mrs. A.H. Dubash for the rest of the year.

### 3. MEMBERSHIP.

- (i) During the year under report there has been a marginal decrease in the membership of the Anjuman which stands at 354 as against 361 during the previous year. Half of the total subscriptions amounting to Rs. 3,693.25 has been taken as donation to the corpus of the Agiari Fund Account. The other half, amounting to Rs. 3,693.25 has been taken as donation to the Corpus of the General Fund Account.
- (ii) The Board struck off the names of 6 members (4 parties) who did not pay their arrears of subscriptions, total amounting to Rs. 126 by 31st December, 1976.
- (iii) In Rule 4 of the Rules and Regulations of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman it is provided that if a member does not pay his subscription within the prescribed time limit, a written reminder shall be sent to him to pay the same within a grace period of 15 days. If the subscription is not paid by the 15th February or 15th August as the case may be, he/she shall automatically cease to be a member forthwith and after the end of February or end of August as the case may be, his/her name shall be removed from the Register of Members. In this regard, it has been noticed that in issuing reminders to defaulting members, besides labour, a lot of expenditure is incurred by way of stationery, postage and loss of interest. The Board of Trustees, therefore, feel that such reminders should be issued at the cost of the defaulting members and that a small additional sum of Rs. 3 should be charged per member who is in arrears at the end of February or end of August as the case may be. If this proposal is approved, Rule 5 will have to be amended slightly as per the following Resolution :—

#### RESOLUTION

Resolved that the following amendments to be made in the Rules and Regulations of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman :

.....In Rule 5, for the existing first sentence, substitute the following sentence :

"An existing member who has ceased to be a member on 16th February or 16th August, as the case may be, for non-payment of subscription; shall be reinstated as a member by the Honorary Secretary on his paying to the Honorary Treasurer, the arrears of subscription as well as the subscription due for the current year in which the payment is made, plus

a sum of Rs. 3/- for each calendar year in which the subscription is arrears on 15th February or 15th August as the case may be."

## **EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM**

In the Annual General Meeting held on 16.3.75, the Board of Trustees proposed that the membership subscriptions should be paid for the whole year annually, instead of half-yearly, as that would facilitate the work of the Honorary Treasurer and the Honorary Secretary in collecting the subscriptions promptly. Some members had pointed out in the said meeting that it might not be possible for all the Members to pay the subscriptions for the whole year in one lumpsum and they had suggested that the subscription should be payable half-yearly at the option of the member concerned. The Rules were amended accordingly. However, subsequent experience has shown that except for one or two members, all the other members who have paid, have paid their subscriptions in one lumpsum for the whole year. In spite of this, it is proposed to continue the facility of payment of the subscription half-yearly at the option of the members concerned. On the other hand the experience of the last few years has shown that membership subscriptions are not paid in time even after written reminder as provided in the Rules and additional written reminders have been issued. Hundreds of rupees of members' subscriptions have been outstanding, in spite of reminders, even up to the third and fourth quarters of the Calendar year. A lot of expenditure of time, money and labour is involved in postage, stationery etc., in issuing circulars/reminders to defaulting members. These expenses roughly work out to Rs. 3/- per member. The Board of Trustees feel that such subsequent reminders, apart from the first reminder which is obligatory under the Rules, should be issued at the cost of the defaulting members who apart from anything else may be continuing to participate in the numerous subsidised functions of the Anjuman; To provide for this, the Board of Trustees have authorised the President to move the above RESOLUTION at the next Annual General Meeting. Accordingly, the above RESOLUTION will be put before the next Annual General Meeting for consideration.

This matter will be considered under item 8 of the Notice for the Annual General Meeting.

## **4. DHARAMSALA**

(i) The Mengusi Parsi Dharamsala continues to provide a high standard of service to Parsi visitors to Delhi. The total service charges collected during the year amounted to Rs. 45,940.50 as against Rs. 30,649.00 of last year. This is



due to increase in available accommodation, better occupancy rate and a slight increase in the room charges.

One-half of the service charges have been transferred to General Fund Account. This year, there has been an excess of expenditure over income of Rs. 13,597.38 as compared to an excess of income over expenditure of Rs. 4,457.79 of last year over the expenditure to the Dharamsala Account.

- (ii) The suggestion/complaint box is kept in the Dharamsala. There was no complaint against the Management of and the services in the Dharamsala during the year. In fact, most of the entries in the complaint book only praise the good management and credit for this happy position goes to the Dharamsala and Aramgah Sub Committee which is looking after the Dharamsala and the Manager of the Dharamsala, Ervad Bagli,
- (iii) In view of the all round increase in prices and of the high cost of maintenance, the room charges have been increased by Re. 1/- at all levels with effect from 1.8.76. The room charges were last revised on 1.1.1973. The revised room charges are as follows :—

<u>Room No.</u>	<u>Per adult</u>	<u>Per day</u>	<u>Per child</u>	<u>Per day</u>
	1st to 14th day	15th day on wards	1st to 14th day	15th day on wards
1. All Rooms (excepting General Room)	Rs. 5/-	6/-	3.50	4.50
2. General Room No. 18	4/-	5/-	3.00	4.00

- (iv) During the year under report, the following donations were received for the Dharamsala :—

- a) Rs. 5000 from Minocher and Aloo Dinshaw Trust Fund
- b) „ 1001 from Mrs. Jer Minoo Bharucha
- c) „ 1111 from Mr. Fali Seerval
- d) „ 1001 from Billimoria Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman
- e) „ 2501 from Mrs. Homai R. Irani
- f) „ 2501 from Mr. Rustom F. Irani
- g) „ 1001 from Mr. Phiroze A. Irani

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	1st to 14th day	15th day on wards	1st to 14th day	15th day on wards
1. All Rooms (excepting General Room)	Rs. 5/-	6/-	3.50	4.50
2. General Room No. 18	4/-	5/-	3.00	4.00

- (iv) During the year under report, the following donations were received for the Dharamsala :—

- a) Rs. 5000 from Minocher and Aloo Dinshaw Trust Fund
- b) „ 1001 from Mrs. Jer Minoo Bharucha
- c) „ 1111 from Mr. Fali Seerval
- d) „ 1001 from Billimoria Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman
- e) „ 2501 from Mrs. Homai R. Irani
- f) „ 2501 from Mr. Rustom F. Irani
- g) „ 1001 from Mr. Phiroze A. Irani

All donations were credited to the corpus of the Dharamsala Fund. The names of those donors who have paid Rs. 1000 and above have been published in the Dipanjali and inscribed on the tablets fixed in the Dharamsala. We are grateful to Mr. D.E. Bagli through whose personal efforts the respective donations were received.

(v) 7 Fire Extinguishers have been installed—2 on the ground floor, 1 near the switch board and 2 on the top floor of Dharamsala and 2 in the Bhiwandiwalla Hall.

(vi) This year the works of white washing/painting of the Dharamsala and Bhiwandiwalla Hall and water proofing of the Bhiwandiwalla Hall were carried out.

#### **5. BHIWANDIWALLA HALL**

(i) The Bhiwandiwalla Hall continues to be used for all major functions organised by the Anjuman and the Social Centre. During the year, a number of social activities were held in it.

(ii) During the period under report 3 Navjotes were performed in the Bhiwandiwalla Hall.

#### **6. PARSİ CEMETERY**

(i) The Prithviraj Lane Cemetery is maintained in good condition.

(ii) Members will have noted from the Accounts that there has been excess of expenditure over income amounting to Rs. 2779.99 as against the excess of income over expenditure of Rs. 988.97 last year.

(iii) Our thanks are due to Mr. Bagli who has been able to collect donations of Rs. 1002 as against Rs. 4786 collected last year. The names of the donors of Rs. 500 and above have been published in the Dipanjali and inscribed on the marble tablet at the Aramgah.

#### **7. DAR-E-MEHER**

(i) On 27.12.1976, the Kaikushru Pallonji Katrak Dar-e-Meher has completed the fifteenth year of its useful service. This year has also been satisfactory from the point of view of its functioning.

(ii) The Parsi Attendant Mr. Faroze Bulsara who joined in October, 1972, is working satisfactorily.

- (iii) We have not been able to get a second Priest inspite of our best efforts. We hope to fill up the vacancy as soon as possible. We have also advertised in Gujarati papers.
- (iv) In appreciation of the good work done by the Agiari staff, they were paid ex-gratia of one month's salary in December, 1976.
- (v) During the year under report, the following donations were received for the Agiari Repairs and Renovation Fund :—

Mr. P.B. Antia	Rs.	1001.00
Mr. Dady Pastakia	"	1001.00
Mr. Sorabji H. Valzerwala	"	1001.00
Mrs. M. Engineer	"	1001.00
P. Godrej Foundation	"	1001.00
A Zoroastrian	"	1001.00
Dr. M.R. Parakh	"	1000.00
Mrs. Motan B. Kanga	"	2202.00
Mr. Behram Kanga	"	3022.00
Vice Adml, RKS Ghandhi	"	2000.00
Mr. V.M. Engineer	"	1001.00
Mrs. Dhun Homi Ghista	"	1000.00
Mrs. Aloo J. Karkaria	"	1001.00
Small Donations	"	1318.00
	Rs.	<u>18550.00</u>

The names of those donors who have paid Rs. 1000 and more have been published in the Dipanjali and inscribed on the marble tablets at the Agiari.

- (vi) This year the work of white washing/painting and water-proofing of the Agiari was carried out. The expenditure has been met from the Agiari Repairs and Renovations Fund. Also grills were fixed in the windows of the main hall of the Agiari.

## 8. DIPANJALI

- (i) Our Journal Dipanjali is now in its fifteenth year. The journal has maintained its high quality of articles and continues to be popular among its readers. Mr. D.E. Mistry and Mr. H.K. Press are the Editor and Adver-



tisement Manager respectively. Our thanks are due to them and to Mr. S. Dinshaw for his active participation in the work of the journal.

- (ii) Despite the rising cost of paper, printing etc. we have been able to make a small profit of Rs. 357.11 as compared to the deficit of Rs. 173.37 last year.
- (iii) Members are again requested to extend their help in securing advertisements so that the journal can be published without any loss. Similarly, contributions from members in the form of material suitable for inclusion in the journal will be most welcome.
- (iv) Some non-members were interested to subscribe for the Dipanjali issues. Since this would involve legal complications, the Board decided to send the publication to the interested parties against a donation of Rs. 8/- per year (for two issues.)

#### 9. SOCIAL CENTRE

- (i) The Social Centre has now completed 22 years of its activities. The Social Centre Committee organised several functions, like Tambola, religious lectures, Diwali function followed by crackers and light refreshments and Annual Sports. All auspicious days like Jamshedi Navroze, Patoti and the fifteenth anniversary of the Agari were celebrated as usual.
- (ii) We gratefully acknowledge the hard work put in by the Social Centre Committee members who have contributed to the success of the Social Centre.
- (iii) The Anjuman's Zonal Communication Directory is being revised and our grateful thanks are due to Mr. Parakh and Mr. Bagli for the good work done. Members are requested to intimate their new address and telephone numbers in case of change of address or telephone numbers.
- (iv) In order to restart the Billiard Club, the Board sanctioned Rs. 5000 for replacing the cloth and for other rent repairs and renovations of the Billiard table. The table is now ready and we welcome our members to join the Billiard Club and make it a success. Enquiries may kindly be addressed to Mr. H.K. Press.
- (v) A Reception was held on behalf of the Anjuman in honour of Admiral and Mrs. Jal Cursetji on 21.7.1976 which was largely attended. The function was followed by a subscription dinner by the Trustees to the Chief Guests.

## **10. SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME**

- (i) The existing scholarship scheme was continued during the year under report. The scheme consists of cash prizes for students with the best performance among all Parsi boys and girls appearing in certain All India Examinations and book grants to students judged on their performance record and achievements.

- (ii) During the year, cash prizes were awarded to the following :—

- a. Miss Navaj Dalal
- b. Mr. Jamshed Contractor

### **Book Grants :**

- a. Mr. Zubbair D. Aria
- b. Miss Zarine Davar
- c. Miss Cashmera Bharucha
- d. Mr. Naozar Albara
- e. Miss Pheroza S. Majoo
- f. Mr. Bejan Dinshaw
- g. Mr. Cyrus D. Pithawala

- (iv) All the above awardees were asked to contribute articles to the Dipanjali as the awards were subject to fulfilling this condition.

## **11. DELHI PARSİ ANJUMANS SOCIETY**

- (i) The Society has completed 29 years of its existence.
- (ii) The Society was not in a position to organise any function during the year 1976.

## **12. FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ANJUMANS OF INDIA**

During the year under review, the Executive Council of the Federation of Zoroastrian Anjumans of India met twice, once in Bombay on 30.1.1976 and then at Surat on 27.11.1976. The following important decisions were taken at these meetings.

- i. To start a Corpus trust for the Priests in the community with the idea of providing gratuity and provident fund for the benefit of old and ret ring priests. The Anjuman/Panchayats from all over the country would be entitled to contribute to and draw on this Trust, provided they have the gratuity and provident fund provisions of their own.

Apart from this, for the amelioration of the Priests, a separate subcommittee has been constituted under the Chairmanship of Mr. Erich A. Nadirshah to work out and present a complete and detailed proposal to the Executive Council by 26th March, 1977, when it meets again at Bombay. The first meeting of this subcommittee was held in Bombay on 30.11.1976 where eminent priests and principals of the two Azhorman Madresses were also requested to participate.

The following decisions were arrived at the Sub-Committee meeting at Bombay :—

- i. An appeal for funds to be drawn up.
- ii. A suitable representation be made with regard to the exemption of the Central Fund when so established from the new taxation laws.
- iii. To formulate a questionnaire for collecting data for Agiaris and Priests.
- iv. Collection of statistics after the questionnaires were filled up should be properly scrutinised by the Zonal Vice Presidents and then forwarded to the Central Body.
- v. To establish a central register of Priests. It was emphasised that such priests who had passed out from the Madresses and those Priests who were really needy should get preference for being enrolled in the central register.
- vi. It was also agreed that a small committee of members residing in Bombay of the Central Body be formed who might meet as often as necessary and then report to the Central Body for taking effective steps.
- ii. A team of eminent lawyers has been formed to go into the important legal issues such as Adoption Law and the rationalisation of the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act. Mr. Erich Desai stated that the main issue was Adoption Law for the Parsis. He stated that the present Bill before the Select Committee in effect stated that any parent can adopt any child and the identity of the child might not be known to the adopting parent. This may mean that Parsi parents may adopt a non-Parsi child and the question may arise if this child's Navjote could be performed.

The matter was discussed at length and Mr. Desai was requested to try to get a clause included to say that for Parsis, adoption be restricted to a child of Parsi father.

iii. Mr. S.D. Nargolwala has been elected as Chairman of the Rustom Mulla Entrepreneurial Sarvajanic Charitable Trust. This trust is in the process of being registered for tax exemption with the appropriate income tax authorities.

iv. The Third World Zoroastrian Congress will be held in Bombay on 25th and 27th November, 1977. Eminent speakers from all over the World would be requested to contribute towards this Congress. It is hoped to discuss the various burning topics concerning the community. Preparatory work on the Congress has already started and is gaining momentum.

Mr. J.N. Guzder has been entrusted with the work of calling the Congress. The theme of the Congress is Zoroastrian Community in the Changing World.

v. A bi-annual Journal of the Federation would be brought out early in 1977.

vi. Several new Anjumans Panchayats have been enrolled as members increasing the total membership of the Federation to 88.

vii. The earlier decision of the Executive Council to hold zonal Conference has been implemented, the first South Zone Conference having been held at Bangalore in October 1976, where members from all over the South Zone had participated in the deliberations.

The Zonal Conference of Parsi Anjumans of North and East India was held at New Delhi on 23rd January, 1977, under the aegis of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India and it was presided over by Shri S.D. Nargolwala, the President of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman, and the Vice President of the Federation. Shri Nargolwala stated that it was very heartening that as many as 168 delegates from all over India were participating in this Conference. The Federation looks after the interest and welfare of entire Parsi community in India. The crucial problems effecting the community were discussed in great detail. They included the significance and importance of the Zoroastrian Religion for the modern Parsi community, diminishing Parsi population especially in the light of inter-communal marriages, the legal aspects of adoption, marriage and divorce laws and the changes needed there in economic conditions of the community and the roll of youth in the overall growth of the community. The Conference had a plenary session in the morning when many leading personalities of the community gave their views on the above problems. These personalities included Shri R.S. Gae, former Law Secretary to the Union Government, Shri J. N. Guzder, a Trustee of the Parsi Panchayat, Bombay and other leaders in the

field of law, education, journalism etc. This was followed by group discussions on the above topics. Thereafter, there was a second plenary session where the speakers answered questions from the delegates. The Conference closed with the adoption of various resolutions to be forwarded to the Federation for consideration and further action. One of the resolutions covered the amendment of the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Law to bring it into line with the latest legislation on the subject by the Union Government for other communities. Another resolution proposed that the definition of the term Parsi should include children of alien fathers by Parsi mothers who have been duly and properly admitted into the Zoroastrian religion. There was considerable discussion on the question of adoption of children. Another resolution unanimously proposed that when a Parsi female marriage outside the community, she should not be ostracised by the community and should be allowed to continue to make use of the community institutions, provided her marriage has been by Civil Law, she has remained a Zoroastrian and continues to profess the Zoroastrian faith. Another resolution proposed that conversion by marriage should be allowed subject to suitable safeguards, in genuine cases. One resolution requested the Federation to consider the effect of housing shortage and emigration resulting in diminishing Parsi population. A very important resolution which was adopted was the amelioration of the Priestly class and providing economic security and social status to Priests. Greater involvement of Parsi parents in the religious education of their children was advocated. It was suggested that there should be wider dissemination of Zoroastrian papers and other literature in a manner which would directly appeal to the youth of the community. Proposals were made for further seminars leading to effective communication and leadership. The Conference called for a junior wing of all community institutions to create a consciousness of the problems facing the community. Proposals were also made for having libraries, news-letters and frequent meetings of families for educative and entertainment purposes. Shri Nargolwala, at the conclusion of his address, quoted the words of an eminent journalist as follows. "The Federation is like the last panel of medical experts at the death bed of a patient. If the panel is successful the patient will survive. If it fails, the patient is doomed to a lingering painful death. There is an important factor in favour of the patient and that is his existence of thousands of years. It spells vast resources of vitality and resilience. The patient is the Parsi community. My diagnosis is chronic ailment, inactivity and the expected complications. At least the patient is now in safe hands. Let him co-operate with the doctors and follow the regimen laid down."

The delegates were most enthusiastic about solving the community's problems and expressed great satisfaction about the quality of the discussions and the conclusions arrived at. The organisers of the Conference were profusely thanked for the very fine effort put in by them.



viii. The Rules and Regulations of the Federation have now been printed in Gujarati also for the benefit of the various members, especially in Gujarat.

ix. Arising out of resolutions passed at the first South Zone Conference, it has been decided to organise Holiday camps, Sports and other cultural activities to which youths could be attracted at the Zonal level and also all-India levels.

It was also resolved to have a roving ambassador who could be invited by Anjuman/Panchayats of different areas to give discourses all over India, particularly in towns and cities out side Bombay, at frequent intervals and to cultivate in the minds of younger generation a sense of belonging to the community and Zoroastrian religion and the responsibility of youth to preserve their glorious heritage. It was also resolved to prepare a standard text of the meanings of the Avastha Scriptures, religious ceremonies and established customs, such a text having the consensus of known scholars or divergent views would create an impact in the minds of the readers particularly laymen and will be regarded as a Bible of Zoroastrianism.

### 13. DEATHS.

During the year 1976, there were 4 burials in the Aramgah out of which 2 were of Members of the Anjumans and 2 were of non-members.

### 14. DONATIONS.

The Board sanctioned a monthly widow's allowance of Rs. 150 for one year to a widow member whose financial condition had been rendered precarious due to her husband's death and continued to be so during the year under report. The Board also sanctioned help of Rs. 75 to an old lady.

### 15. FINANCE.

i. All the Funds show an excess of expenditure over receipts. The receipts of Dharamsala were 50% more than in the previous year, this was due to the high occupancy ratio and the addition of extra rooms. In the General Fund, collections of subscriptions were satisfactory. The total deficit in all the Funds amount to Rs. 71,020.97 as against the total deficit of Rs. 28,572.75 for the last year. Our total assets have decreased to

Rs. 8,93,657 from Rs. 9,03,417. The deficit has been made upto a very large extent by the credit of donations to the corpus amounting to Rs. 66,461. The overall financial position of the Anjuman continues to be satisfactory.

- ii. The overall depreciations in the value of the investment amount to Rs. 28,428.74 Paise as against Rs. 43,774.19 Paise in the last year. The overall depreciation which is much less this year, is on account of the still continuing recession in various sectors of the industry. As decided in the previous year, the Anjuman continued to invest in fixed deposits so as to avoid depreciation in the value of investments because of market fluctuations due to any Government Ordinance or the state of the Industry.
- iii. The internal audit instituted fifteen year ago has been continued and we record here our thanks to M/s. Thakur Vaidyanath Aiyar & Co. for their untiring efforts and help in the matter of Audit and Accounts. A copy of the Auditor's Report is circulated with the Accounts. The Annual honorarium of Rs. 750/- has been paid to the Auditors for doing the internal audit.

#### 16. STAFF.

We have received whole-hearted co-operation from the members of the Anjuman staff. Out of the sizeable collection of funds from voluntary contributions of Re. 1 per head per year towards, the Servants Collection Fund, an amount equal to half a month's salary has been paid exgratia to all the members of the staff. The balance in this fund has increased and will be carried forward. It is hoped that members will continue to give their unstinted support to this worthy cause.

The servants requested for revision of their pay scales. In view of increase in rooms and considering the wages they were getting now and their devoted service for a number of years, the Board sanctioned an adhoc increment of Rs. 20/- to all the servants. This new pay scale was made effective from 1.7.1976. Since the pay of the staff, after the said increase, were raised to Rs. 100/- and above and in view of the fact that in future servants will not be available on the present meagre pay scale, the Board sanctioned a common revised scale of ;. 100—6—120—10—150

## 17. CONCLUSION.

The President and other Members of the Board of Trustees have made all possible efforts to maintain the tempo and high standard of religious, social, cultural and other activities. The Social Centre is making all possible efforts to keep up the tempo of the activities and their efforts have been very successful. The Board of Trustees are confident that with the active co-operation of the Members, the coming year will also be yet another successful year for the Anjuman and the Community.

K.R. Parakh  
Honorary Secretary

February 21, 1977.

# DELHI PARSI ANJUMAN, NEW DELHI

## DIPANJALI ACCOUNT

Income & Expenditure Account for the year ended 31.12.1976

EXPENDITURE			INCOME		
		Amount			Amount
To Printing Expenses :			By Advertisements :		
June Issue	1,300.68		June Issue	1,435.00	
December Issue	1,230.00	2,539.68	December Issue	1,395.00	2,830.00
.. Bank Charges		111.15	.. Interest		45.94
.. Excess of Income over			.. Miscellaneous Income		32.00
Expenditure carried down		257.11			
	TOTAL	Rs. 2,907.94		TOTAL	Rs. 2,907.94
To Balance brought forward		142.12	By Excess of Income over		
.. Balance taken over to			Expenditure brought down		357.11
Balance Sheet		214.99			
		Rs. 357.11			357.11

NOTE : Balance brought forward (Rs. 142.12) represents accumulated net losses in the Dipanjali Account for the past 15 years.

Sd/-

THAKUR VAIDYANATH AIYAR & CO.,  
Chartered Accountants.

Flat No. 3, Thapar House,  
124, Janpath, New Delhi-1.

Dated : 31st January, 1977.

# DELHI PARSI ANJUMAN, NEW DELHI

## DIPANJALI ACCOUNT

Balance Sheet as at 31st December, 1976

LIABILITIES			ASSETS		
General Fund :			Advertisement dues outstanding		1,405.00
Balance as on 1.1.1976	2,143.50		Cash at Bank		2,183.49
Add :					
Surplus for the year as per Income & Expenditure Account	214.99	2,358.49			
Outstanding Printing Charges		1,230.00			
Total	Rs.	3,588.49	Total	Rs.	3,588.49

- Note : a) The balance shown in General Fund as on 1.1.1976 is a balancing figure which has been worked out after considering the assets and liabilities as on 31.12.1975.
- b) The accounts have been prepared on Accrual basis.

Examined & found Correct.

Sd/

THAKUR VAIDYANATH IYAR & CO.  
Chartered Accountants.

Flat No. 3, Thapar House,  
124, Janpath, New Delhi-1.

Dated :



# Economic uplift of the Zorastrians

## JAMSHED CONTRACTOR

It is well known that most Zorastrians in India are above the economic level of our Nation. However there are many who can not be said to be in comfortable position. Discussions on economic uplift should centre around those that need help from the community. It should be remembered that economic uplift does not involve charity to the individual concerned. However it involves helping the individual to achieve by his or her own effort better living conditions and better opportunities. Though it is clear that charity is not to be received by the individual, the community as a whole and those that are in the position to help fellow Zorastrians have to go about it in a spirit of charity and dedication. It is very important to preserve the dignity and self respect of those that are to receive the help.

Economic uplift of those that need help can mainly be achieved by increasing opportunities of his or her own level of achievements. There are no general or specific points or activities that can be applied to all the needy people. The need as opposed to limitations of an individual is a very important consideration for achieving meaningful results. To illustrate the above, helping a young man from a poor family to own and operate a taxi can be as important and meaningful to an individual who is not qualified to take a job. Whereas on the other hand for some members of a middle income family who do have a background of education but do not have job opportunities need help from those that are in a position to give either in the form of a job or the start of a trade or a small business. What is most important is that some of us from the community who are in the position to help others offer themselves and their services in a spirit of charity without actually offering charity to those that need their help.

# Religious Education for the Younger Generation of Zoroastrians in India and Abroad

**FARIDA DUBASH**

Who am I?

What is my religion?

What is my culture?

I know I am a Zoroastrian but who is a Zoroastrian? A person who believes in the teachings of Zorathustia.

Yet again, who was Zorathustia?

What were his teachings? What did he preach?

Questions, questions, questions and no answers. I am sure there must be many more young minds thirsting for knowledge but unable to find any way of quenching it.

We Parsees were a dynamic force. Why have we regressed? In Bombay we continue to have some semblance of community but what happens when we move away? We lose touch with the religion, with the community and the little culture we possess and then the inevitable occurs—we mingle and merge with non-Parsees and are compelled to lose our identity.

How then to spread the religious knowledge and awareness amongst the young?

Here are a few ideas that appeal to me.

The youngsters should be called in to look after the 'Agyari'. They can keep the diyas ready, polish the silver and generally look after the upkeep of our Fire Temple. This will help to create a feeling of belonging and in the process one can question the significance of the symbols and ceremonies and gain first-hand meaningful knowledge.

To enable Zoroastrian youth all over the world to keep in contact with one another we could start a penpal system. An elder, aware, sympathetic and interested person could take on the responsibility of replying to individual queries raised by the youngsters either through newsletters or personally.

The fact that prayers are being published in English alongwith their translation is very heartening. But there is a dearth of knowledge regarding many aspects of our ancient religion that needs further clarification.

The youth of today is aware of the necessity for change but it is up to our esteemed elders to guide and lead the way to a new and brighter tomorrow where Zoroastrian youth can hold its own and perhaps one day march ahead to lead the world through Manashni, Gavashni and Kunashni.

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